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**AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN LOUISIANA: FIRST QUARTER 2005**  
**Orleans Parish leads Louisiana in average weekly wages**

In the first quarter of 2005, the average weekly wage in Orleans Parish was \$738, the highest level among the State's six parishes with 75,000 or more jobs. Caddo Parish registered the lowest weekly wage among Louisiana's six large parishes at \$600. Wages in the remaining parishes of Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, and Lafayette were more concentrated, ranging from \$654 to \$633, a difference of only \$21 per week. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that wage levels in five of the six large Louisiana parishes were above the statewide average of \$619, but all were below the national average of \$775. (See table A.)

Three of the six large parishes—Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge and Jefferson—had annual wage growth exceeding 3.0 percent in the first quarter of 2005, well above the national rate of 2.2 percent and higher than the statewide gain of 2.8 percent. Wages in one parish, Caddo, declined over the 12-month period, falling 1.3 percent.

**Table A. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 6 largest parishes in Louisiana, first quarter 2005 (2)**

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6).....	129,802.3	\$775	-	2.2	-
Louisiana.....	1,873.8	619	-	2.8	-
Caddo, LA.....	122.0	600	275	-1.3	300
Calcasieu, LA.....	83.0	639	244	3.4	58
East Baton Rouge, LA....	246.2	654	221	3.2	67
Jefferson, LA.....	213.0	633	251	3.3	62
Lafayette, LA.....	120.1	642	239	2.6	105
Orleans, LA.....	244.5	738	132	2.2	131

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

## Average Weekly Wages in Louisiana, First Quarter 2005 (continued)

### Wage levels

Of the 322 large counties in the U.S., nearly one-third (101) registered average weekly wages above the national average. As a result, although the \$738 wage level in Orleans Parish was within 5 percent of the U.S. average, it ranked 132<sup>nd</sup> among the 322 large counties. Wage levels in four Louisiana parishes were clustered together, 16 to 18 percent below that for the nation. East Baton Rouge registered average weekly wages of \$654 and ranked 221<sup>st</sup>, followed by Lafayette at \$642 (239<sup>th</sup>), Calcasieu at \$639 (244<sup>th</sup>), and Jefferson at \$633 (251<sup>st</sup>). Caddo Parish, with wages of \$600 per week, was almost 23 percent lower the national average and ranked 275<sup>th</sup> in the nation. (See table A.)

Among the 322 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$2,025. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,613, followed by Suffolk, Mass (\$1,390), and Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,372). Four of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., Somerset, N.J., and Hudson, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while 2 more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C. and Arlington, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area. At the other end of the wage scale, the lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron, Texas (\$460), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$463), Horry, S.C. (\$479), Webb, Texas (\$490), and Yakima, Wash. (\$516). The wage level in each of the four lowest-ranked counties was less than 25 percent of the wage level reported for the highest-ranked county in the nation, New York.

On a statewide level, Louisiana average weekly wages were 20 percent below the national average in the first quarter of 2005. The State's \$619 per week average ranked Louisiana 36<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Despite placing in the lower half of the national ranking, Louisiana's weekly wage was above that of three near-by states, Oklahoma (\$591, 44<sup>th</sup>), Arkansas (\$579, 46<sup>th</sup>), and Mississippi (\$545, 49<sup>th</sup>). However, wages were below those in the neighboring state of Texas (\$760, 15<sup>th</sup>). (See table 1.)

Nationwide, average wage levels were greater than \$1,000 per week in the District of Columbia (\$1,277), New York (\$1,096), and Connecticut (\$1,084). Average weekly wages in this group were nearly 40 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, three states reported wages of less than \$550 per week -- 70 percent or less of the national average: Montana (\$533), South Dakota (\$544), and Mississippi (\$545).

## Average Weekly Wages in Louisiana, First Quarter 2005 (continued)

### Over-the-year wage changes

While wage levels in Louisiana's large parishes were below the national average, their rates of increase were equal to or greater than the national average in all but one case. The 3.4-percent over-the-year gain in Calcasieu Parish was well above the 2.2-percent increase for the nation and ranked 58<sup>th</sup> highest among the 322 large counties in the country. Two other parishes closely followed: Jefferson at 3.3 percent (62<sup>nd</sup>) and East Baton Rouge at 3.2 percent (67<sup>th</sup>). The 2.6-percent wage growth in Lafayette Parish ranked 105<sup>th</sup>, placing it among the top one-third in the national rankings. While Orleans Parish registered the highest wage in the State, its wage growth only equaled the national average and ranked 131<sup>st</sup>. Caddo Parish, which recorded the lowest wage, was the only parish to post an over-the-year decline in wages, -1.3 percent, ranking it close to the bottom nationwide (300<sup>th</sup>).

Leading the nation in average weekly wage growth was Collier, Fla., with an increase of 10.7 percent. Cumberland, Pa., was second with 9.3-percent growth, followed by the counties of Hudson, N.J. (9.0 percent), Henrico, Va. (8.4 percent), and Fairfield, Conn., and Rock Island, Ill. (7.7 percent each). Thirty-five counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton County, Ga., had the largest decrease, -6.0 percent, followed by the counties of Marin, Calif. (-5.6 percent), Hamilton, Ind. (-4.3 percent), McLean, Ill. (-2.8 percent), and St. Louis, Minn. (-2.7 percent).

At the state level, average weekly wages in Louisiana rose 2.8 percent from the first quarter of 2004 to the first quarter of 2005, the 11<sup>th</sup> highest wage increase among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (Arkansas and New Hampshire also had 2.8-percent wage gains and, as a result, the same ranking.) The District of Columbia led the U.S. in over-the-year wage growth at 4.2 percent. Delaware was next in line with an increase of 4.0 percent followed by Connecticut, Vermont, and Wyoming, all with increases of 3.9 percent. The top ten states were rounded out by New York (3.7 percent), Florida and Montana (both at 3.5 percent), Texas (3.1 percent), and Illinois (2.9 percent). Five states reported increases of less than 1 percent: Kentucky (0.6 percent), Nebraska and Minnesota (0.8 percent each), and Missouri and Indiana (0.9 percent each). No state reported a decline in average weekly wages. (See table 1.)

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.5 million employer reports cover 129.8 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

## Average Weekly Wages in Louisiana, First Quarter 2005 (continued)

### Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* will be available for sale in late 2005 from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside of Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800 and the fax number is 202-512-2104. The bulletin will be available at a later date in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>. Also, QCEW news releases issued by regional offices have been placed at one convenient Web site location, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 214-767-6970 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Dallas BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Dallas by dialing 214-767-9613 and requesting document number 9557.

#### **NOTE**

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

**Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, first quarter 2005 (2)**

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4).....	129,802.3	\$775	--	2.2	--
Alabama.....	1,871.5	642	32	2.6	16
Alaska.....	290.3	744	18	1.5	37
Arizona.....	2,459.7	698	23	2.3	22
Arkansas.....	1,144.8	579	46	2.8	11
California.....	15,064.5	872	7	2.0	26
Colorado.....	2,158.6	787	11	2.2	24
Connecticut.....	1,624.7	1,084	3	3.9	3
Delaware.....	407.9	878	6	4.0	2
District of Columbia.....	661.7	1,277	1	4.2	1
Florida.....	7,731.0	679	26	3.5	7
Georgia.....	3,877.0	742	19	1.9	30
Hawaii.....	597.6	669	28	2.0	26
Idaho.....	594.2	561	47	1.6	36
Illinois.....	5,644.9	848	8	2.9	10
Indiana.....	2,838.7	667	30	0.9	47
Iowa.....	1,419.5	616	37	1.7	33
Kansas.....	1,290.7	631	34	1.4	41
Kentucky.....	1,741.2	628	35	0.6	51
Louisiana.....	1,873.8	619	36	2.8	11
Maine.....	573.2	614	38	1.7	33
Maryland.....	2,458.0	831	9	2.0	26
Massachusetts.....	3,094.8	964	4	1.2	44
Michigan.....	4,218.3	780	13	1.2	44
Minnesota.....	2,559.7	783	12	0.8	49
Mississippi.....	1,113.1	545	49	2.3	22
Missouri.....	2,644.2	671	27	0.9	47
Montana.....	403.8	533	51	3.5	7
Nebraska.....	879.8	600	42	0.8	49
Nevada.....	1,187.6	714	21	2.6	16
New Hampshire.....	606.9	745	17	2.8	11
New Jersey.....	3,863.5	963	5	1.8	32
New Mexico.....	765.0	596	43	2.1	25
New York.....	8,242.3	1,096	2	3.7	6
North Carolina.....	3,808.0	687	24	2.7	14
North Dakota.....	320.4	550	48	1.5	37
Ohio.....	5,228.6	706	22	2.0	26
Oklahoma.....	1,453.9	591	44	1.9	30
Oregon.....	1,621.6	685	25	1.5	37
Pennsylvania.....	5,481.0	747	16	1.5	37
Rhode Island.....	466.9	736	20	1.2	44
South Carolina.....	1,800.3	611	39	2.5	18
South Dakota.....	365.1	544	50	2.4	20
Tennessee.....	2,665.2	660	31	1.4	41
Texas.....	9,454.6	760	15	3.1	9
Utah.....	1,091.9	607	40	1.3	43
Vermont.....	297.5	639	33	3.9	3
Virginia.....	3,525.7	794	10	2.7	14
Washington.....	2,702.3	766	14	2.4	20
West Virginia.....	683.6	583	45	2.5	18
Wisconsin.....	2,687.0	668	29	1.7	33
Wyoming.....	246.2	606	41	3.9	3
Puerto Rico.....	1,048.2	433	(5)	3.3	(5)
Virgin Islands.....	44.2	650	(5)	13.4	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.